



Code Words

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Isiah Leggett, County Executive

Leon Rodriguez, County Attorney

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY

The Office of the County Attorney is the legal arm of the Montgomery County government. The County Attorney's staff exclusively advises and represents County agencies, including the Council. The Office of the County Attorney also serves the citizens of Montgomery County directly. Although staff cannot offer legal advice to individuals, we can offer guidance on the application of Montgomery County law, including code enforcement matters, and can help to direct those with questions to appropriate agencies. We can be reached at (240) 777-6700.

CODE ENFORCEMENT UNIT

The Code Enforcement Unit serves the community by helping to fairly and reasonably enforce our County Code and helping to solve the problems leading to citations. If you have a question regarding County Code enforcement, a specific Code enforcement case, or would like to schedule a speaker for or meeting with your community group, please contact James Savage, Division Chief, at (240) 777-6779 or james.savage@montgomerycountymd.gov.

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Spring Cleaning: Home Maintenance Requirements

Nowelle Ghahhari

Assistant County Attorney

In addition to lawn maintenance, spring also signals time to make much-needed repairs to your home. Chapter 26 of the Montgomery County Code governs housing and building maintenance standards, and requires that your home be maintained in "good repair." The purpose of the County's home and building maintenance requirements is to prevent urban blight, assure the continued economic and social stability of structures and neighborhoods, and to protect the health, safety, and welfare of residents.

With regard to the interior of your home, "good repair" means that electrical, water, and sewer service is properly installed and kept in working order. The home's space and water heating devices also must be properly installed and operating in a safe manner. Further, all plumbing fixtures must be free from defects, leaks, and obstructions, to prevent problems related to moisture build-up, and possible flooding. Water closet compartments also must contain flooring that is impervious to water; all other floor coverings in the home must be in good repair and in a sanitary condition. Other surfaces in the home, such as walls, ceiling, floors, interior woodworking, doors and windows, must be in working condition, and free of flaking, peeling, loose, or lead-based paint. And while you are making the rounds inside of your home, be sure that there is a functioning smoke detector in each sleep area, as well as in each stairway, and replace any batteries that need replacing.

With regard to the exterior of your home, "good repair" means that the installation, repair, or

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replacement of materials on your home are performed in a workmanlike manner, and with materials of the same quality or better than the original materials. Section 26-2 defines *workmanlike* as “executed in a skilled manner; for example, general plumb, level, square, in line, undamaged, and without marring adjacent work.” “Good repair” also means that all windows, doors, and hatchways are in working condition. Exterior surfaces of each home, including doors, windows, and hatchways, also must be weather, water, and rodent-proof, and free of flaking, peeling, or loose paint. Additionally, roofs and paved surfaces must be free of any standing water, so as to prevent the onset of dampness in any wall, ceiling, or floor. Maintenance of exterior surface also entails ensuring that each window has a functioning screen. Homeowners also are required to exterminate insects, rodents, or other vermin in or on their home. Exterminating involves more than just calling the exterminator. Section 26-2 defines *exterminate* as the control or elimination of insects, rodents, or other vermin by eliminating harborage points; removing or making inaccessible materials that may serve as food; lawful poisoning, spraying, fumigating, or trapping; and any other method approved by the enforcing agency. And do not forget to ensure that the number on the outside of your home is visible and legible from the street, even if you receive your mail at another location. Your house number is essential to rescue personnel’s ability to locate your home in the event of an emergency.

Home maintenance also reaches to structures, fixtures, and other improvements found around your home and in your yard. For example, lighting fixtures in your yard or affixed to the exterior of your home must be directed away from the windows of neighbors’ homes or apartments. Chapter 26 requires that homeowners keep their driveways, sidewalks, walkways, parking lots, and patios in serviceable and safe condition.

For further questions or concerns regarding home maintenance, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs publishes a Housing Code Enforcement Handbook, which is available online at <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov>. Click on the link for Departments, then Housing and Community Affairs, and then Housing. Information can also be obtained directly at 240-777-3600. 🏠

Off Leash Can Cause You and Your Dog Trouble

Alexandra Thompson

Assistant County Attorney

Chapter 5, Section 203 (a) (1), of the Montgomery County Code requires dog owners to keep dogs on a leash when off their private property. Montgomery County Animal Control Officers enforce this section and will issue a citation to the owner which imposes a \$100 fine. Citizens need to be conscientious and considerate of neighbors and keep dogs on a leash, as problems frequently arise when dogs are at large.

The District Court of Maryland for Montgomery County hears many of these cases. The cases often involve people who have been frightened or, in the worst case scenario, attacked by an at large dog, as well as attacks of leashed dogs. Physical injury does not have to occur to create a violation. But when it does it can cause not only expense but neighborhood rifts that can last for a lot longer than the healing of wounds. Dogs at large can also be destructive to property. No one appreciates having to clean up after a neighbor’s dog has gotten into trash or defecated on the lawn. Not only neighbors and other dog owners are inconvenienced and possibly harmed, but the dog at large is in danger when crossing streets and running onto neighbor’s property, potentially to be attacked by a territorial pet.

Animal Control Officers often issue the citation based on a citizen’s witness of the event. If the dog at large is spotted by Animal Control, it will often be taken to the shelter until claimed by the owner.

The leash requirement is one that is easy to comply with and can prevent not only the expense of a citation, but exists to protect you, your neighbors, and your pet. Besides, everyone benefits from a walk with the dog. 🐕



IMPORTANT PHONE NOS.

Animal Services	(240) 773 – 5925
Abandoned Cars	(301) 840 – 2455
Air Pollution Incidents	(240) 777 – 7770
Building Permits	(240) 777 – 6370
Building Code Inspections	(240) 777 – 6210
Consumer Protection	(240) 777 – 3636
County Information	(240) 777 – 1000
Electrical Licenses & Permits	(240) 777 – 6240
Environmental Protection	(240) 777 – 7770
Fire-Code Violations	(240) 777 – 2457
Housing & Code Enforcement	(240) 777 – 3600
Illegal Dumping	(240) 777 – 7770/DUMP
Untagged Cars	(240) 777 – 3600
Noise Control	(240) 777 – 7770
Recycling/Leaf Collection	(240) 777 – 6410
Snow Removal & Pot Holes	(240) 777 – ROAD
Solid Waste	(240) 777 – 6410
Street Lights	(240) 777 – 2190
Use & Occupancy Permits	(240) 777 – 6210
Vendor Information	(240) 777 – 6240
Water Pollution Incidents	(240) 777 – 7770
Weed Control	(240) 777 – 3600
Zoning Information	(240) 777 – 6240
Zoning Complaints	(240) 777 – 6259

Office of the County Attorney – Code Words
101 Monroe Street, 3rd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850
(240) 777-6700

Code Words Editor
Janita L. Burdette, Paralegal

Principal Counsel
James Savage, Esquire

To be placed on our mailing list or to submit questions or comments, please contact us at the above address or mcgatty@montgomerycountymd.gov. Please include your name, address, and telephone number or e-mail address. *Code Words* is published quarterly.

Lawn Maintenance in Montgomery County

Kathryn Lloyd

Assistant County Attorney

As spring and warmer weather arrive, it is important for Montgomery County residents to take proper care of their lawns and the exteriors of their properties. Property owners, lessees, and others in charge of land should be aware of requirements within the Montgomery County Code to properly maintain lawns and the exteriors of subdivisions, dwelling units, and nonresidential property. Adherence to such requirements will help keep Montgomery County attractive throughout the spring and summer months.

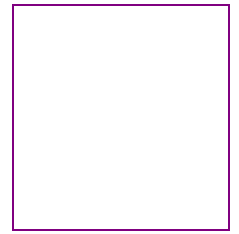
Chapter 58 of the Montgomery County Code governs weeds. A weed is defined as “[p]oison ivy; ragweed; kudzu; Canada, musk, nodding, plumeless, and bull thistles; any plant, except another thistle, identified as a noxious weed under State law; and any other plant which the Director finds by regulation endangers public health or safety if allowed to grow unchecked.” An owner, lessee, agent, or any other person in charge of land in a subdivision or within 100 feet of a subdivision must not allow either the generalized growth of any weed or any plant growth (not including trees, ornamental shrubs, flowers, or garden vegetables) more than 12 inches high within 15 feet of any property boundary. An owner who violates the Code will receive notice of the violation and will have 10 days to correct the violation. Should the person fail to correct the violation, the County may remove the weeds/plants and bill the landowner. Failure to pay the bill can result in a lien against the land on the property tax bill or any other legal collection of the debt.

Furthermore, Chapter 26 of the Montgomery County Code provides additional guidelines for the maintenance of exterior areas. The Code explains that dwelling unit lawns must be reasonably free of erosion. Shrubbery, trees, vines, hedges, and other vegetation, which includes dead branches and trees, must be maintained by the property owner so that they do not pose a danger to health or safety. Owners of nonresidential property are required to abide by similar ground maintenance requirements. Following these basic lawn maintenance

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101 Monroe Street, 3rd Floor
Rockville, MD 20850



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Lawn Maintenance

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guidelines and consulting the County Code to answer any additional questions will enable County residents to help keep Montgomery County well-maintained throughout the upcoming months. 🌱

